

Message Text

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53
ACTION CU-03

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 USIA-06 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

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----- 104979
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4152

CONFIDENTIAL TUNIS 6358

FOR CU/NEA AND NEA

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, TS, OEXC, OVIP

SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL VISITOR TRAVEL: TUNISIAN MINISTER
OF INTERIOR TAHAR BELKHODJA

1. TAHAR BELKHODJA, MINISTER OF INTERIOR AND HIGH AMONG
PRIME CANDIDATES FOR FUTURE PRESIDENCY OR PRIME MINISTER-
SHIP OF TUNISIA, HAS LET ME KNOW HE WOULD VALUE PRIVATE
SHORT VISIT TO U.S. IN UPCOMING WEEKS AND HAS EXPRESSED
STRONG INTEREST SEE U.S. ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL
PROCESS IN ACTION. REQUEST DEPT'S CONCURRENCE IN
PRINCIPLE TO PARTIAL I.V. GRANT FOR WEEK OR TEN DAYS
IN ORDER OFFER PROGRAM TO HIM ASAP. BECAUSE OF HIS
LIMITED ENGLISH HE WOULD REQUIRE AN ESCORT-INTERPRETER.

2. COMMENT: THIS IS TOO GOOD A TARGET OF OPPORTUNITY
FOR US TO PASS UP. I AM NOT YET SURE THAT HE WILL
BE ABLE TO OBTAIN PRIME MINISTER'S PERMISSION TO BE
ABSENT, BUT UNDERSTAND OHAT A USG INVITATION FORWARDED
BY LETTER FROM ME IS LIKELY TO BE PERSUASIVE. I
REALIZE THAT I.V. CIRCUITS ARE PROBABLY HEAVILY LOCATED
AT ELECTION SEASON BUT THE BRIEF STRAIN NEEDED TO GIVE
BELKHODJA AN IDEA OF U.S. DEMOCRACY IN ACTION WILL
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REPRESENT EFFORT WELL SPENT. HIS ONLY PREVIOUS VISIT
TO THE U.S. WAS ON OFFICIAL BUSINESS SEVERAL YEARS AGO
AND LASTED ONLY TWO DAYS. HE WOULD PROBABLY WISH TO

BE PRESENT A FEW DAYS BEFORE AND A FEW DAYS AFTER
NOVEMBER 2 ELECTIONS. HE HAS INDICATED HE CAN FUND
INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL PORTION OF TRIP, AND REQUESTED
GRANT SHOULD COVER DOMESTIC TRAVDEL, PER DIEM, AND ESCORT-
INTERPRETER.

MULCAHY

NOTE BY OCT: OPR TAKE MSG AS ORIGINAL.

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